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# Ceramic Sherd Assemblage from the Cherokee Lake Site (41RK132), Rusk County, Texas

*Timothy K. Perttula*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Cherokee Lake site (41RK132), also called the Tiawichi Creek Burial site, was discovered by Buddy Calvin Jones in 1956, on a terrace area along Tiawichi Creek at its confluence with Mill Creek, inundated by the construction of Lake Cherokee in 1947, that had been graded for the construction of fish hatcheries there (Jones 1968:48). Tiawichi Creek is a tributary stream in the mid-Sabine River basin (Figure 1). Jones identified a single burial and a large storage pit in Area A at the southern end of the terrace, where there was a shallow (0–30 cm bs) midden deposit (Jones 1968:Figure 4).

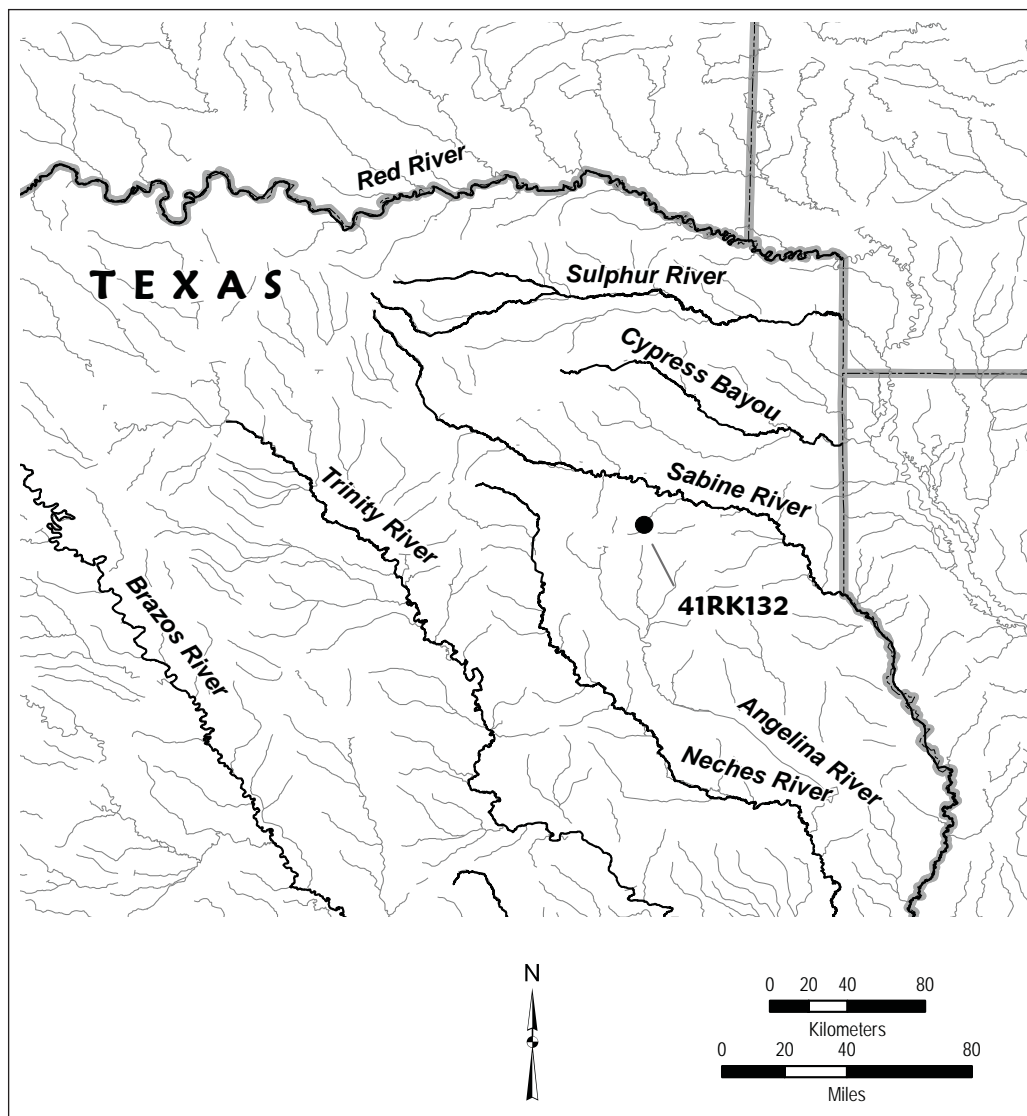


Figure 1. Location of the Cherokee Lake site in East Texas.

The burial in Area A is an Historic Nadaco Caddo grave that probably dates to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century based on the recovery of 15 blue glass beads. This strand of beads was placed near the legs of the deceased individual. The Caddo person had been placed in an extended supine position in a pit that was 1.83 m long and 0.76 m in width, with the head facing towards the west. The estimated depth of the grave was 0.76 m (Jones 1968:52), and its fill was a dark charcoal-stained midden.

In addition to the strand of glass beads, three ceramic vessels had been placed as funerary offerings in the grave along with a Fresno arrow point by the upper left leg (see Jones 1968:Plate 8b). One Simms Engraved vessel was on the left side of the body, near the foot of the grave, while a second Simms Engraved vessel had been placed by the individual's right foot, along with a Maydelle Incised jar (Perttula 2012). A plain clay elbow pipe had been placed inside the jar.

A storage pit excavated by Jones (1968) in Area A at the Cherokee Lake site appears to have been primarily associated with a pre-A.D. 1200 Caddo occupation, based on the recovery of Hickory Engraved and Dunkin Incised pottery sherds, long-stemmed Red River clay pipe sherds, and Catahoula, Alba, and Bonham arrow points. This occupation probably created the midden deposits found in Area A.

In this article, I discuss ceramic sherds collected by Jones from Area A at the Cherokee Lake site. Some of the sherds were surface collected in March 1956 from the midden deposits, but it is not clear if this ceramic sherd assemblage is part of the sample of 300 sherds discussed by Jones (1968:58–59) from an Area A surface collection. The present ceramic sherd assemblage is curated at the Gregg County Historical Museum (GCHM).

### Ceramic Sherd Assemblage

The ceramic sherd assemblage from the Cherokee Lake site in the GCHM collections consists of 268 plain and decorated sherds (Table 1). Approximately 88 percent of the sherds are from grog-tempered vessels. Three grog-tempered body sherds have drilled suspension holes that range from 6.7–7.1 mm in diameter.

**Table 1. Ceramic sherd assemblage from the Cherokee Lake site (41RK132).**

Ware	Grog-tempered	Bone-tempered	N
Plain	225*	31	256
Utility	9	2	11
Fine	1	—	1
Totals	235	33	268

\*includes a bottle rim

The frequency of decorated sherds in this assemblage is a very low 4.5 percent (see Table 1), and more than 90 percent of this small sample of decorated sherds is from utility ware vessels. In the utility wares, sherds with punctated decorative elements—primarily rows of tool punctations—are most common in the overall assemblage (33 percent), followed by sherds with incised (25 percent) and brushed-incised (25 percent) decorative elements (Table 2). The brushed-incised sherds may be from Maydelle Incised or Pease Brushed-Incised vessels. The one fine ware body sherd is from a red-slipped carinated bowl.

**Table 2. Decorative methods and decorative elements represented in the sherds from the Cherokee Lake site.**

Decorative method/ Decorative element	Rim	Body	N
<b>Utility Ware</b>			
<i><b>Brushed-Incised</b></i>			
parallel brushed-incised marks and lines	–	2	2
parallel brushing marks and overlying parallel incised lines	–	1	1
<i><b>Incised</b></i>			
diagonal opposed lines	2	–	2
parallel lines	–	1	1
<i><b>Incised-Punctated</b></i>			
circular incised zone with circular punctates	–	1	1
<i><b>Punctated</b></i>			
circular punctated rows	–	1	1
tool punctated rows	1	2	3
<b>Fine Ware</b>			
<i><b>Red-Slipped</b></i>			
int./ext. red-slipped	–	1	1
Totals	3	9	12

The incised rim sherds have diagonal opposed incised lines (Figure 2a), either from Dunkin Incised (see Suhm and Jelks 1962:Plate 19g) or Maydelle Incised (see Suhm and Jelks 1962:Plate 52b) vessels. The one incised-punctated body sherd has circular incised elements that have small circular punctates within it as well as outside the circular element (Figure 2b).

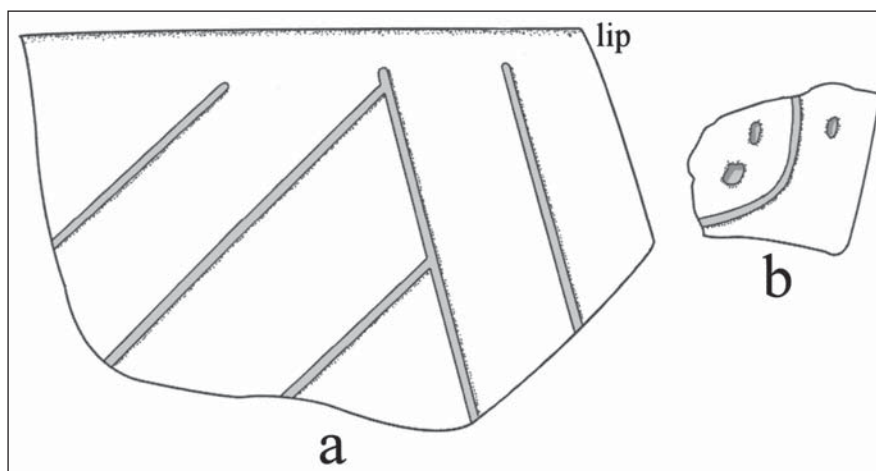


Figure 2. Selected decorative elements in utility ware sherds from the Cherokee Lake site: a, diagonal opposed rim sherd; b, incised-punctated body sherd.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The ceramic sherd assemblage (n=268) collected by Buddy Calvin Jones from Area A at the Cherokee Lake site (41RK132) on Tiawichi Creek is dominated by sherds from grog-tempered vessels. The few decorated sherds are not from vessels of known Historic Caddo age and Kinsloe phase contexts (Perttula 2007:Table 1, 2012), but instead appear to be from a Middle Caddo period (ca. A.D. 1200–1400) component in the village area based on the relative frequency of brushed-incised sherds (25 percent) in this assemblage compared to dated Caddo sites in the middle Sabine River basin (Perttula 2014:Table 13). Jones (1968:58–59) had previously identified what he termed as an occupation during “late Gibson times,” and he mentioned that sherds of the following types were present, including Hickory Engraved, Holly Fine Engraved, Cowhide Stamped, and Pease Brushed-Incised, along with brushed, punctated, and punctated-incised wares.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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